

Gladys Tantaquidgeon was an exceptional woman. The Mohegan Tribe and Connecticut are fortunate that for more than a century she was among us. She will be missed.

**TORTURE VICTIMS RELIEF
REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2005**

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2017). The Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA) has provided critical support to thousands of survivors of torture since it was first authorized in 1999. The sad fact is that torture is still used by governments around the world and the need for the bill is as pronounced as ever. With revelations of the U.S.'s own use of torture making waves around the world, we can ill afford to take a step back in the field of torture treatment.

The United States must renew its commitment against the use of torture. And it must support efforts to ease the pain and suffering of those living in parts of the world where there are no other resources—not to mention political motivation—to help survivors of torture.

Currently, 27 programs in 17 states including Illinois receive assistance for torture treatment in the U.S. Treatment provided by these programs enables survivors of torture to recover their lives and become productive members of their communities. Many of these centers, including the center in Illinois, also train mainstream professionals. This increases the ability of health care providers, attorneys, leaders of faith, and others, to provide for the special needs of torture victims and contribute to the prevention of torture.

The TVRA is at work in my district, supporting the work of the Marjorie Kovler Center of Heartland Alliance. The Center provides medical, mental health and social services to more than 300 torture survivors every year. While these services are provided for people across the state and into Indiana and Wisconsin, the Center receives more referrals from my Congressional district than any other. These individuals make their way to our community at great personal cost. They come seeking safety, only to be confronted with the difficulties of adjusting to life in the United States. They each carry a heavy burden from the trauma they have suffered, and many would not become the productive members of the community that they want to be if it not for the services supported by the TVRA.

In addition to the people in my district that the Center serves, I am proud to say that dozens of my constituents volunteer and work at the Marjorie Kovler Center. I have had the opportunity to meet many of them at events in the district over the past several years and am aware of their skill and commitment. The fact is that volunteer and in-kind donations worth more than \$400,000 annually leverage funds from the TVRA spent in my district. This amounts to a one-to-one match of Federal funds provided by my community.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the Torture Victim Relief Re-

authorization Act, and I urge my colleagues to support funding for torture treatment centers.

**OPPOSING SECTION 3145 OF THE
RECONCILIATION SPENDING
CUTS CONFERENCE REPORT (H.R.
4241)**

HON. DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to Section 3145 of H.R. 4241, the proposed Reconciliation Spending Cuts Conference Report, and to express my unequivocal opposition to that provision and the base bill. That section will just provide added cause to reject the report, because it would require everyone—everyone—applying for Medicaid to produce a birth certificate or passport to prove citizenship.

Supporters of this provision talk a good game. And, on the surface, their rationale seems plausible and reasonable. They claim that Section 3145 will save a great deal of money by restricting undocumented residents from lying about their citizenship and falsely obtaining Medicaid services. However, Mr. Speaker, proponents of Section 3145 do not discuss is a comprehensive study by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General. This July 2005 study found no compelling evidence that illegal residents were lying about their citizenship status in order to qualify for Medicaid.

So it is nothing more than another barely veiled attack on immigrants—our fellow human beings—and it would also have adverse impacts on other American citizens as well.

For many of us here, the idea of obtaining a passport or a copy of a birth certificate does not sound difficult. However, for many Americans—particularly low-income Americans in rural communities, low-income racial and ethnic minorities and elderly Americans—getting a passport or a copy of a birth certificate is very difficult and sometimes even impossible. Even the cost is a barrier for some.

But further complicating the process for some Americans, particularly those who are low-income, racial and ethnic minorities and/or born in rural areas, is the fact that when they were born, their families may not have had access to hospitals—they may not be able to get birth certificates and therefore passports simply because they were born at home.

As you know, during much of the last century, many hospitals and health clinics—especially in the south and in areas entrenched in segregation and discrimination—would not admit minorities, especially African Americans. This long history of discrimination created barriers to health care access that continue to affect the health and health care of racial and ethnic minorities today. It is the same discrimination that now still makes it difficult for so many low-income African Americans senior—and other seniors of color—to obtain the required documentation they would need under this provision to obtain Medicaid services. Mr. Speaker, let's not be a part of allowing discrimination to create additional barriers to health care for immigrants or other Americans of color.

Further, were section 3145 to pass, it will be states and counties who will determine how to

enforce it and who to ask for the additional documentation.

My concern is that this provision will put low-income Americans at the mercy of individuals whose assumptions about their status put them at great risk for discrimination. It would attack everyone's civil liberties.

Mr. Speaker, Section 3145 is based on a completely false and slanderous assumption about immigrants in this country, and it is nothing more than another anti-immigrant provision among the many egregious ones that are being debated on the floor today.

There are repercussions for health in general. If enacted this provision would also have extraordinarily detrimental effects on the health and health care of many American citizens, it will increase the already unacceptably high numbers of uninsured Americans, and consequently, it will exacerbate health disparities—both racial and ethnic, and rural—as well as worsen the health and well being of many American citizens.

In our focus on section 3145, we don't want anyone to get the wrong impression that this is one bad provision in an otherwise good bill. Nothing could be further from fact. What it does is just make a conference report that is shaping up to be a terrible bill already, even worse.

Just today I received a letter from the national Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. It read in part:

"The role of government is to protect its people and work for the common good. This is not the time for the budget reconciliation process to create greater hardships for those who are already experiencing great suffering. To do so is not only unjust; it is a sin. It violates all the fundamental Christian principles of loving thy neighbor, caring for the poor, and showing mercy. As religious leaders, this violation is unacceptable to us."

This is a reference to the entire budget reconciliation bill, and whether one is Baptist, Catholic, Jew or Moslem the words ring true.

It is rotten to the core, and this country, which pledges to be one "under God", should not let the Immigration/Border Security Bill or any part of the inhumane budget reconciliation or spending cut bill as it is now written become the law of this land.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 638, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

CONGRATULATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF JERIOUS NORWOOD

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 16, 2005

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, Mississippi State University has much to be proud of: excellence in academics with a reputation for top agriculture and energy research. This year, I